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AN

ODE

UPON

DEDICATING A BUILDING,

AND

ERECTING A STATUE,

TO

SHAKESPEARE,

AT

STRATFORD UPON AVON.

BY D. G. (David Garrick).

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ADVERTISEMENT.

COULD ſome gentlemen of approved ability have been prevailed upon to do juſtice to the ſubject of the following Ode, the preſent apology would have been unneceſſary;—but as it was requiſite to produce ſomething of this kind upon the occaſion, and the lot having unluckily fallen on the perſon perhaps the leaſt qualified to ſucceed in the attempt, it is hoped the candour of the public will eſteem the performance rather as an act of duty, than vanity in the author.

As ſome news-paper writers have illiberally endeavoured to ſhake the poetic character of our immortal bard (too deeply indeed rooted in the heart to be affected by them) it is recommended to thoſe who are not ſufficiently eſtabliſhed in their dramatic faith, to peruſe a work lately publiſhed, called, *An Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of* SHAKESPEARE, by which they will with much ſatisfaction be convinced, that *England* may juſtly boaſt the honour of producing the greateſt dramatic poet in the world.

To ſtrengthen and juſtify the general admiration of this aſtoniſhing Genius, it has been thought proper to ſubjoin to the Ode ſome undeniable Teſtimonies (both in proſe and verſe) of his unequalled original talents.

If it ſhall be found, that *ſpeaking* that part of the Ode, which has uſually been conveyed in recitative, produces a better effect, the Author flatters himſelf he may lay claim to ſome little merit on that account: As to the Ode itſelf, he preſents it to the public as an object of their good-nature,—to his friends as an exerciſe of their partiality,—to his enemies, as a lucky opportunity of venting their wit, humour, criticiſm, ſpleen, or whatever elſe they pleaſe, ſhould they think it worthy of their notice.

N. B. In page 2. line 11. by miſtake, in ſome of the copies, the line that ſhould be

Now ſwell at once the choral ſong,
is,
At once pour forth the choral ſong.

O D E.

To what bleſt genius of the iſle,
Shall Gratitude her tribute pay,
Decree the feſtive day,
Erect the ſtatue, and devote the pile?

Do not your ſympathetic hearts accord,
To own the "boſom's lord?"
'Tis he! 'tis he!—that demi-god!
Who Avon's flow'ry margin trod,
While ſportive *Fancy* round him flew,
Where *Nature* led him by the hand,
Inſtructed him in all ſhe knew,
And gave him abſolute command!
'Tis he! 'tis he!
"The god of our idolatry!"

To him the ſong, the Edifice we raiſe,
He merits all our wonder, all our praiſe!
Yet ere impatient joy break forth,
In ſounds that lift the ſoul from earth;
And to our ſpell-bound minds impart
Some faint idea of his magic art;
Let awful ſilence ſtill the air!
From the dark cloud, the hidden light
Burſts tenfold bright!
Prepare! prepare! prepare!
Now ſwell the choral ſong,
Roll the full tide of harmony along;
Let Rapture ſweep the trembling ſtrings,
And Fame expanding all her wings,
With all her trumpet-tongues proclaim,
The lov'd, rever'd, immortal name!
SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE!
Let th'inchanting ſound,
From Avon's ſhores rebound;
Thro' the Air,
Let it bear,
The precious freight the envious nations round!

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Swell the choral ſong,
Roll the tide of harmony along,
Let Rapture ſweep the ſtrings,
Fame expand her wings,
With her trumpet-tongues proclaim,
The lov'd, rever'd, immortal name!
SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE!

AIR.

I.

Sweeteſt bard that ever *ſung*,
Nature's *glory*, Fancy's *child*;
Never ſure did witching tongue,
Warble forth ſuch wood-notes wild!

II.

Come each Muſe, *and ſiſter* Grace,
Loves *and* Pleaſures *hither come*;
Well you know this happy place,
Avon's *banks were once your home*.

III.

Bring the laurel, bring the flow'rs,
Songs of triumph to him raiſe;
He united all your pow'rs,
All uniting, ſing his praiſe!

Tho' *Philip*'s fam'd unconquer'd ſon,
Had ev'ry blood-ſtain'd laurel won;
He ſigh'd—that his creative word,
(Like that which rules the ſkies,)
Could not bid other nations riſe,
To glut his yet unſated ſword:

But when our SHAKSPEARE's matchleſs pen,
Like *Alexander*'s ſword, had done with men;
He heav'd no ſigh, he made no moan,
Not limited to human kind,
He fir'd his wonder-teeming mind,
Rais'd other worlds, and beings of his own!

A I R.

When Nature, ſmiling, hail'd his birth,
To him unbounded pow'r was given;
The whirlwind's wing to ſweep the ſky,
" The frenzy-rowling eye,
To glance from heav'n to earth,
From earth to heav'n!"

O from

O from his muſe of fire
Could but one ſpark be caught,
Then might theſe humble ſtrains aſpire,
To tell the wonders he has wrought.
To tell,—how ſitting on his magic throne,
Unaided and alone,
In dreadful ſtate,
The ſubject paſſions round him wait;
Who tho' unchain'd, and raging there,
He checks, inflames, or turns their mad career;
With that ſuperior ſkill,
Which winds the fiery ſteed at will,
He gives the aweful word—
And they, all foaming, trembling, own him for their Lord.

With theſe his ſlaves he can controul,
Or charm the ſoul;
So realiz'd are all his golden dreams,
Of terror, pity, love, and grief,
Tho' conſcious that the viſion only ſeems,
The woe-ſtruck mind finds no relief:
Ingratitude would drop the tear,
Cold-blooded age take fire,
To ſee the thankleſs children of old *Lear*,
Spurn at their king, and ſire!

With *his* our reaſon too grows wild!
What nature had disjoin'd,
The poet's pow'r combin'd,
Madneſs and *age*, *ingratitude* and *child*.

Ye guilty, lawleſs tribe,
Eſcap'd from puniſhment, by art or bribe,
At *Shakeſpeare*'s bar appear!
No bribing, ſhuffling there—
His genius, like a ruſhing flood,
Cannot be withſtood,
Out burſts the penitential tear!
The look appall'd, the crime reveals,
The marble-hearted monſter feels,
Whoſe hand is ſtain'd with blood.

SEMI-CHORUS.

When law is weak, and juſtice fails,
The poet holds the ſword and ſcales.

AIR.

Though crimes from death and torture fly,
The ſwifter muſe,
Their flight purſues,
Guilty mortals more than die!

They

They live indeed, but live to feel
The ſcourge and wheel,
" On the torture of the mind they lie ;"
Should harraſs'd nature ſink to reſt,
The Poet wakes the ſcorpion in the breaſt,
Guilty mortals more than die !

When our *Magician*, more inſpir'd,
By charms, and ſpells, and incantations fir'd,
Exerts his moſt tremendous pow'r ;
The thunder growls, the heavens low'r,
And to his darken'd throne repair,
The *Demons* of the deep, and *Spirits* of the air !

But ſoon theſe horrors paſs away,
Thro' ſtorms and night breaks forth the day :
He ſmiles,—they vaniſh into air !
The buſkin'd warriors diſappear !
Mute the trumpets, mute the drums,
The ſcene is chang'd—*Thalia* comes,
Leading the nymph *Euphroſyne*,
Goddeſs of joy and liberty !
She and her ſiſters, hand in hand,
Link'd to a num'rous frolick band,

With

With roſes and with myrtle crown'd,
O'er the green velvet lightly bound,
Circling the Monarch of th' inchanted land!

AIR.

I.

Wild, frantick with pleaſure,
They trip it in meaſure,
To bring him their treaſure,
The treaſure of joy.

II.

How gay is the meaſure,
How ſweet is the pleaſure,
How great is the treaſure,
The treaſure of joy.

III.

Like roſes freſh blowing,
Their dimpled-cheeks glowing,
His mind is o'erflowing;
A treaſure of joy!

IV.

His rapture perceiving,
They ſmile while they're giving,
He ſmiles at receiving,
A treaſure of joy.

With kindling cheeks, and ſparkling eyes,
Surrounded thus, the Bard in tranſport dies;
The little *Loves*, like bees,
Cluſt'ring and climbing up his knees,
His brows with roſes bind;
While *Fancy*, *Wit*, and *Humour* ſpread
Their wings, and hover round his head,
Impregnating his mind.
Which teeming ſoon, as ſoon brought forth,
Not a tiny ſpurious birth,
But out a mountain came,
A mountain of delight!
LAUGHTER roar'd out to ſee the ſight,
And FALSTAFF was his name!
With ſword and ſhield he, puffing, ſtrides;
The joyous revel-rout
Receive him with a ſhout,

And modeſt *Nature* holds her ſides:
No ſingle pow'r the deed had done,
But great and ſmall,
Wit, *Fancy*, *Humour*, *Whim*, and *Jeſt*,
The huge, miſhapen heap impreſs'd;
And lo—SIR JOHN!
A compound of 'em all,
A comic world in ONE.

AIR.

A world where all pleaſures abound,
So fruitful the earth,
So quick to bring forth,
And the world too is wicked and round.

As the well-teeming earth,
With rivers and ſhow'rs,
Will ſmiling bring forth
Her fruits and her flow'rs;
So FALSTAFF *will never decline;*
Still fruitful and gay,
He moiſtens his clay,
And his rain and his rivers are wine;

Of the world he has all, but its care;
No load, but of fleſh, will he bear;
He laughs off his pack,
Takes a cup of old ſack,
And away with all ſorrow and care.

Like the rich rainbow's various dyes,
Whoſe circle ſweeps o'er earth and ſkies,
The heav'n-born muſe appears;
Now in the brigheſt colours gay,
Now quench'd in ſhow'rs, ſhe ſades away,
Now blends her ſmiles and tears.

Sweet *Swan of Avon!* ever may thy ſtream
Of tuneful numbers be the darling theme;
Not *Thames* himſelf, who in his ſilver courſe
Triumphant rolls along,
Britannia's riches and her force,
Shall more harmonious flow in ſong.

O had thoſe bards, who charm the liſt'ning ſhore
Of Cam and Iſis, tun'd their claſſic lays,

And from their full and precious ſtore,
Vouchſaf'd to fairy-haunted *Avon* praiſe!
(Like that kind bounteous hand *,
Which lately gave the raviſh'd eyes
Of Stratford ſwains
A rich command,
Of widen'd river, lengthen'd plains,
And opening ſkies)
Nor *Greek*, nor *Roman* ſtreams would flow along,
More ſweetly clear, or more ſublimely ſtrong,
Nor thus a ſhepherd's feeble notes reveal,
At once the weakeſt numbers, and the warmeſt zeal.

A I R.

I.

Thou ſoft-flowing Avon, *by thy ſilver ſtream,*
Of things more than mortal, ſweet Shakeſpear *would dream,*
The fairies by moonlight dance round his green bed,
For hallow'd the turf is which pillow'd his head.

II.

The love-ſtricken maiden, the ſoft-ſighing ſwain,
Here rove without danger, and ſigh without pain,

* The D— of D—, with the concurrence of Mr. B—y, moſt generouſly ordered a great number of Trees to be cut down, to open the river *Avon* for the Jubilee.

The

The ſweet bud of beauty, no blight ſhall here dread,
For hallow'd the turf is which pillow'd his head.

III.

Here youth ſhall be fam'd, for their love, and their truth,
And chearful old age, feel the ſpirit of youth;
For the raptures of fancy here poets ſhall tread,
For hallow'd the turf is that pillow'd his head.

IV.

Flow on, ſilver Avon, *in ſong ever flow,*
Be the ſwans on thy boſom ſtill whiter than ſnow,
Ever full be thy ſtream, like his fame may it ſpread,
And the turf ever hallow'd which pillow'd his head.

Tho' bards with envy-aching eyes,
Behold a tow'ring eagle riſe,
And would his flight retard;
Yet each to *Shakeſpeare*'s genius bows,
Each weaves a garland for his brows,
To crown th' heaven-diſtinguiſh'd Bard.
Nature had form'd him on her nobleſt plan,
And to the genius join'd the feeling man.

What

What tho' with more than mortal art,
Like *Neptune* he directs the ſtorm,
Lets looſe like winds the paſſions of the heart,
To wreck the human form;
Tho' from his mind ruſh forth, the Demons to deſtroy,
His heart ne'er knew but love, and gentleneſs, and joy.

AIR.

More gentle than the ſouthern gale,
Which ſoftly fans the bloſſom'd vale,
And gathers on its balmy wing,
The fragrant treaſures of the ſpring,
Breathing delight on all it meets,
" *And giving, as it ſteals, the ſweets.*"

Look down bleſt SPIRIT from above,
With all thy wonted gentleneſs and love;
And as the wonders of thy pen,
By heav'n inſpir'd,
To virtue fir'd,
The charm'd, aſtoniſh'd, ſons of men!
With no reproach, even now, thou view'ſt thy work,
To nature ſacred as to truth,

Where

Where no alluring miſchiefs lurk,
To taint the mind of youth.
Still to thy native ſpot thy ſmiles extend,
And as thou gav'ſt it fame, that fame defend;
And may no ſacrilegious hand
Near *Avon*'s banks be found,
To dare to parcel out the land,
And limit Shakeſpear's hallow'd ground *.
For ages free, ſtill be it unconfin'd,
As broad, and general, as thy boundleſs mind.

Can *Britiſh* gratitude delay,
To him the glory of this iſle,
To give the feſtive day
The ſong, the ſtatue, and devoted pile?
To him the firſt of poets, beſt of men?
"*We ne'er ſhall look upon his like again!*"

* This alludes to a deſign of incloſing a large common field at *Stratford*.

DUETT.

DUETT.

Shall the hero laurels gain,
For ravag'd fields, and thouſands ſlain?
And ſhall his brows no laurels bind,
Who charms to virtue humankind?

CHORUS.

We will,—his brows with laurel bind,
Who charms to virtue human kind:
Raiſe the pile, the ſtatue raiſe,
Sing immortal *Shakeſpeare*'s praiſe!
The ſong will ceaſe, the ſtone decay,
But his Name,
And undiminiſh'd fame,
Shall never, never paſs away.

TESTIMONIES

TO THE

GENIUS AND MERITS

OF

SHAKESPEARE.

TESTIMONIES.

To draw no envy, SHAKESPEARE, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame.
While I confeſs thy writings to be ſuch,
As neither man nor muſe can praiſe too much,
I therefore will begin. Soul of the age!
Th' applauſe! delight! the wonder of our ſtage!
My SHAKESPEAR riſe. I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or *Spencer*, or bid *Beaumont* lie
A little farther to make thee a room;
Thou art a monument without a tomb.
Triumph, my *Britain*, thou haſt one to ſhow;
To whom all ſcenes of *Europe* homage owe,
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the muſes ſtill were in their prime;
When like *Apollo* he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a *Mercury* to charm!
Nature herſelf was proud of his deſigns,
And joy'd to wear the dreſſing of his lines!
Which were ſo richly ſpun, and woven ſo fit,
As ſince ſhe will vouchſafe no other wit.
My gentle Bard! look how the father's face
Lives in his iſſue, even ſo the race

Of SHAKESPEARE's mind and manners brightly ſhines,
In his well-turned and true-filed lines:
In each of which he ſeems to ſhake a lance,
As brandiſh'd at the eyes of ignorance,
Sweet Swan of *Avon!* what a ſight it were
To ſee thee in our water yet appear,
And make thoſe flights upon the banks of *Thames*,
That ſo did take *Eliza*, and our *James!*
But ſtay, I ſee thee in the hemiſphere
Advanc'd, and made a conſtellation there!
Shine forth, thou Star of poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or chear the drooping ſtage;
Which ſince thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And deſpairs day, but for thy volume's light.

BEN JONSON.

What needs my SHAKESPEARE for his honour'd bones
The labour of an age in piled ſtones,
Or that the hallow'd reliques ſhould be hid
Under a ſtar-ypointing pyramid?
Dear ſon of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'ſt thou ſuch weak witneſs of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and aſtoniſhment
Haſt built thyſelf a live-long monument.
For whilſt to the ſhame of ſlow endeavouring art
Thy eaſy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd book
Thoſe Delphic lines with deep impreſſion took,
Then thou our fancy of itſelf bereaving,
Doſt make us marble with too much conceiving;

And

And ſo ſepulcher'd in ſuch pomp doſt lie,
That kings for ſuch a tomb would wiſh to die! MILTON.

SHAKESPEARE, who (taught by none) did firſt impart,
To *Fletcher* wit, to labouring *Jonſon* art:
He, monarch-like, gave thoſe his ſubject law,
And *is* that Nature which they paint and draw:
Fletcher reach'd that which on his heights did grow,
Whilſt *Jonſon* crept, and gather'd all below:
This did his love, and this his mirth digeſt;
One imitates him moſt, the other beſt:
If they have ſince out-writ all other men,
'Tis with the drops which fall from SHAKESPEARE's pen:
But SHAKESPEARE's magic could not copied be,
Within that circle none durſt walk but he;
He works by magic ſupernatural things,
For SHAKESPEARE's pow'r is ſacred as a king's. DRYDEN.

SHAKESPEARE, (whom you, and ev'ry playhouſe bill,
Style the divine, the matchleſs, what you will)
For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight,
And grew *immortal* in his own deſpight. POPE.

——————— For lofty ſenſe,
Creative fancy, and inſpection keen,
Thro' the deep windings of the human heart,
Is not wild SHAKESPEARE thine and Nature's boaſt?
THOMPSON.

When

When learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes
Firſt rear'd the ſtage, immortal SHAKESPEARE roſe;
Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
Exhauſted worlds, and then imagin'd new:
Exiſtence ſaw him ſpurn her boundleſs reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:
His pow'rful ſtrokes preſiding truth impreſs'd,
And unreſiſted paſſion ſtorm'd the breaſt. JOHNSON.

What are the lays of artful *Addiſon*,
Coldly correct, to SHAKESPEARE's warblings wild?
Whom on the winding *Avon*'s willow'd banks
Fair Fancy found, and bore the ſmiling babe
To a cloſe cavern: (ſtill the ſhepherds ſhew
The ſacred place, whence with religious awe
They hear, returning from the field at eve,
Strange whiſp'ring of ſweet muſick thro' the air)
Here, as with honey gather'd from the rock,
She fed the little pratler, and with ſongs
Oft ſooth'd his wondering ears, with deep delight
On her ſoft lap he ſat, and caught the ſounds.

WARTON.

——————— But happier *Stratford*, thou
With inconteſted laurels deck thy brow;
Thy bard was thine *unſchool'd*, and from thee brought
More than all *Egypt*, *Greece*, or *Aſia* taught.
Not *Homer*'s ſelf ſuch matchleſs honours won,
The *Greek* has rivals, but thy SHAKESPEARE none.

SEWARD.

O youth

O youth and virgins: O declining eld:
O pale misfortune's ſlaves: O ye who dwell
Unknown with humble quiet; ye who wait
In courts, or fill the golden ſeat of kings:
O ſons of ſport and pleaſure: O thou wretch
That weep'ſt for jealous love, or the ſore wounds
Of conſcious guilt, or death's rapacious hand
Which left thee void of hope: O ye who roam
In exile; ye who thro' the embattl'd field
Seek bright renown; or who for nobler palms
Contend, the leaders of a public cauſe;
Approach: behold this marble. Know ye not
The feature? Hath not oft his faithful tongue
Told you the faſhion of your own eſtate,
The ſecrets of your boſom? Here then, round
His monument with reverence while ye ſtand,
Say to each other: "This was SHAKESPEARE's form;
Who walk'd in every path of human life,
Felt every paſſion; and to all mankind
Doth now, will ever, that experience yield
Which his own GENIUS only could acquire."

AKINSIDE.

Far from the ſun and ſummer gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's * darling laid,
What time, when lucid *Avon* ſtray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face: The dauntleſs child
Stretch'd forth his little arms, and ſmil'd.

* SHAKESPEARE.

This

This pencil take (ſhe ſaid) whoſe colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too theſe golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of joy;
Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the ſacred ſource of ſympathetic tears. GRAY.

Bring thou to *Britain*'s plain the choral throng;
Diſplay thy buſkin'd pomp, thy golden lyre;
Give her hiſtoric powers the ſoul of ſong,
And mingle *Attic* art with SHAKESPEARE's fire.
Ah! what, fond boy, doſt thou preſume to claim?
The Muſe reply'd: Miſtaken ſuppliant, know,
To light in SHAKESPEARE's breaſt the dazzling flame
Exhauſted all Parnaſſus could beſtow.

MASON.

In the firſt ſeat, in robe of various dyes,
A noble wildneſs flaſhing from his eyes,
Sat SHAKESPEARE.—In one hand a wand he bore,
For mighty wonders fam'd in days of yore;
The other held a globe, which to his will
Obedient turn'd, and own'd the maſter's ſkill:
Things of the nobleſt kind his genius drew,
And look'd thro' Nature at a ſingle view:
A looſe he gave to his unbounded ſoul,
And taught new lands to riſe, new ſeas to roll;
Call'd into being ſcenes unknown before,
And, paſſing Nature's bounds, was ſomething more.

CHURCHILL.

Hail,

Hail, prodigy of Nature's genuine growth!
Collected in thyſelf thou ſtandſt ſublime,
A world of intellect, and fancy! Thou,
Reaching from high to low, with magic touch,
Inchanted'ſt ev'ry theme. To thee was ſhewn
Each paſſion's inmoſt ſource, with all the wiles,
And each meander of the changeful heart.
Thy pen from life's warm ſchool its copies drew,
The ſtriking feature, and deſcriptive air,
Comic, or grave, and, by the mimic ſcene
Compell'd, loud Laughter roar'd amain, Grief wept,
And Terror look'd aghaſt. Ev'n royalty,
Array'd by thee, mov'd more majeſtic. Wit
And humour flow'd ſpontaneous from thy mind,
As flow'rs from Earth's green lap. Thy potent ſpells
From their bright ſeats ærial ſprites detain'd,
Or from their unſeen haunts, and ſlumb'ring ſhades
The fairy tribes awak'd, with jocund ſtep,
The circled green and leafy hall to tread:
While, from his dripping caves, old *Avon* ſent
His willing Naiads to their harmleſs rout.

JAGO.

Hear them on SHAKESPEARE! there they foam, they rage!
Yet taſte not half the beauties of HIS page;
Nor ſee that Art, as well as Nature, ſtrove
To place HIM foremoſt in th' *Aonian* grove.
For there, there only, where the Siſters meet,
HIS Genius triumphs, and the work's complete.

WHITEHEAD, *Poet Laureat.*

Though there are many, many more poets who have ſpoken of SHAKESPEARE *with equal praiſe and admiration, yet theſe, which firſt occurred, were thought ſufficient.—Leſt any of our readers ſhould think with a certain gentleman, who, upon hearing* Milton's *verſes in praiſe of* SHAKESPEARE, *ſaid, He never regarded what was ſaid in poetry,—that the very nature of it was fiction, and had no value without it,—there is added ſome undeniable teſtimonies in proſe, of* SHAKESPEARE's *unparalleled genius.*

——— SHAKESPEARE was a man, who, of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largeſt and moſt comprehenſive ſoul. All the images of Nature were ſtill preſent to him, and he drew them not labouriouſly, but luckily: when he deſcribes any thing, you more than ſee it, you feel it too. Thoſe who accuſe him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned: he needed not the ſpectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot ſay he is every where alike; where he ſo, I ſhould do him injury to compare him with the greateſt of mankind. But he is always great, where ſome great occaſion is preſented to him: No man can ſay he ever had a fit ſubject for his wit, and did not then raiſe himſelf as high above the reſt of poets,

Quantum lenta ſolent inter viburna cupreſſi.

DRYDEN.

Among the *Engliſh*, SHAKESPEARE has incomparably excelled all others. That noble extravagance of fancy, which he had in ſo great perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak ſuperſtitious part of his reader's imagination; and made him capable of ſucceeding, when he had nothing to ſupport him beſides the

the ſtrength of his own genius. There is ſomething ſo wild, and yet ſo ſolemn, in the ſpeeches of his ghoſts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginary perſons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them, and muſt confeſs, if there are ſuch beings in the world, it looks highly probable they ſhould talk and act as he has repreſented them.

——— Our inimitable SHAKESEARE is a ſtumbling-block to the whole tribe of theſe rigid criticks: who would not rather read one of his plays, when there is not a ſingle rule of the ſtage obſerved, than any production of a modern critic, where there is not one of them violated? SHAKESPEARE was indeed born with all the ſeeds of poetry, and may be compared to the ſtone of *Pyrrhus*'s ring, which, as *Pliny* tells us, had the figure of Apollo and the nine muſes in the viens of it, produced by the ſpontaneous hand of Nature without any help from art.

ADDISON.

But certainly the greatneſs of this Author's genius does no where ſo much appear, as where he gives his imagination an entire looſe, and raiſes his fancy to a flight above mankind, and the limits of the viſible world. ROWE.

If ever any author deſerved the name of an original it was SHAKESPEARE. Homer himſelf drew not his art ſo immediately from the fountains of Nature, it proceeded through Egyptian ſtainers and channels, and came to him not without ſome tincture of the learning, or ſome caſt of the models of thoſe before him. The poetry of SHAKESPEARE was inſpiration indeed: he is not ſo much an imitator, as an inſtrument of Nature; and it is not ſo juſt to ſay that he ſpeaks from her, as that ſhe ſpeaks through him.

His characters are ſo much Nature herſelf, that it is a ſort of injury to call them by ſo diſtant a name as copies of her. Thoſe of other poets have a conſtant reſemblance, which ſhews that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the ſame image: each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every ſingle character in SHAKESPEARE is as much an individual, as thoſe in life itſelf; it is as impoſſible to find any two alike; and ſuch as from their relation or affinity in any reſpect appear moſt to be twins, will, upon compariſon, be found remarkably diſtinct. To this life and variety of character, we muſt add the wonderful preſervation of it; which is ſuch throughout his plays, that had all the ſpeeches been printed without the very names of the perſons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every ſpeaker.

The power over our paſſions was never poſſeſſed in a more eminent degree, or diſplayed in ſo different inſtances. Yet all along, there is ſeen no labour, no pains to raiſe them; no preparation to guide our gueſs to the effect, or to be perceived to lead toward it: but the heart ſwells, and the tears burſt out, juſt at the proper places: we are ſurprized the moment we weep; and yet upon reflection find the paſſion ſo juſt, that we ſhould be ſurprized if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

How aſtoniſhing is it again, that the paſſions directly oppoſite to theſe, Laughter and Spleen, are no leſs at his command! That he is not more a maſter of the great, than of the ridiculous, in human nature; of our nobleſt tenderneſſes, than of our vaineſt foibles; of our ſtrongeſt emotions, than of our idleſt ſenſations!

Nor does he only excel in the paſſions; in the coolneſs of reflection and reaſoning, he is full as admirable. His ſentiments are not only in general the moſt pertinent and judicious upon every ſubject, but by a talent very peculiar, ſomething between penetration

tration and felicity, he hits upon that particular point on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each moment depends. This is perfectly amazing, from a man of no education or experience in thoſe great and public ſcenes of life, which are uſually the ſubject of his thoughts: ſo that he ſeems to have known the world by intuition, to have looked through human nature at one glance, and to be the only author that gives ground for a very new opinion, That the philoſopher, and even the man of the world, may be born as well as the poet. POPE.

SHAKESPEARE created, as it were, the *Engliſh* theatre: that he boaſted a ſtrong, fruitful genius: that he was natural and ſublime: that his ſcenes are beautiful and noble, though ſometimes dreadful: that his paſſages are ſtrong and forcible, and atone for all his faults: and that his dramatic pieces dart ſuch reſplendant flaſhes as amaze and aſtoniſh!

VOLTAIRE's Letters concerning the *Engliſh* Nation.

In how many points of light muſt we be obliged to gaze at this great poet! In how many branches of excellence to conſider and admire him! Whether we view him on the ſide of art or nature, he ought equally to engage our attention: whether we reſpect the force and greatneſs of his genius, the extent of his knowledge and reading, the power and addreſs with which he throws out and applies either Nature, or Learning, there is ample ſcope both for our wonder and pleaſure. If his diction, and the cloathing of his thoughts attract us, how much more muſt we be charmed with the richneſs and variety of his images and ideas! If his images and ideas ſteal into our ſouls, and ſtrike upon our fancy, how much are they improved in price, when we come to reflect with what propriety and juſtneſs they are applied to character! If we

look

look into his characters, and how they are furniſhed and proportioned to the employment he cuts out for them, how are we taken up with the maſtery of his portraits! What draughts of Nature! What variety of originals, and how differing from each other! How are they dreſſed from the ſtores of his own luxurious imagination, without being the apes of mode, or borrowing from any foreign wardrobe! THEOBALD.

Since therefore other nations have taken care to dignify the works of their moſt celebrated poets with the faireſt impreſſions, beautified with the ornaments of ſculpture, well may our SHAKESPEARE be thought to deſerve no leſs conſideration: and as a freſh acknowledgment hath lately been paid to his merit, and a high regard to his name and memory, by erecting his ſtatue at a public expence; ſo it it is deſired that this new edition of his works, which has coſt ſome attention and care, may be looked upon as another ſmall monument deſigned and dedicated to his honour. HANMER.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, whoſe excellent Genius opened to him the whole heart of man, all the mines of Fancy, all the ſtores of nature, and gave him power beyond all other writers to move, aſtoniſh, and delight mankind.

Lord LYTTELTON.

Of all the literary exercitations of ſpeculative man, whether deſigned for the uſe or entertainment of the world, there are none of ſo much importance, or what are more of our immediate concern, than thoſe which let us into the knowledge of our nature. Others may exerciſe the reaſon, or amuſe the imagination; but theſe only can improve the heart, and form the human mind to wiſdom. Now in this ſcience our SHAKESPEARE is confeſſed to occupy the foremoſt

moſt place; whether we conſider the amazing ſagacity with which he inveſtigates every hidden ſpring and wheel of human action; or his happy manner of communicating this knowledge, in the juſt and lively paintings which he has given us of all our paſſions, appetites, and purſuits. WARBURTON.

I ſhall not attempt any laboured encomiums on SHAKESPEARE, or endeavour to ſet forth his perfections, at a time when ſuch univerſal and juſt applauſe is paid him: He himſelf tells us,

To gild refined gold, or paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To ſmooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To ſeek the beauteous eye of heaven to garniſh,
Is waſteful and ridiculous exceſs.

And waſteful and ridiculous indeed it would be, to ſay any thing in his praiſe, when preſenting the world with ſuch a collection of beauties, as perhaps is no where to be met with; and, I may very ſafely affirm, cannot be paralleled from the productions of any other ſingle author, ancient or modern.

DODD.

——— If ſuch another poet could ariſe, ſhould I very vehemently reproach him, that his firſt act paſſed at *Venice*, and his next at *Cyprus*. Such violations of rules merely paſſive, becomes the comprehenſive Genius of SHAKESPEARE, and ſuch cenſures are ſuitable to the minute and ſlender criticiſm of Voltaire:

Non uſque adeo permiſcuit imis
Longus ſumma dies, ut non, ſi voce Metelli
Serventur leges, malint a Cæſare telli.

This

This therefore is the praiſe of SHAKESPEARE, that his drama is the mirrour of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raiſe up before him, may here be cured of his delirious extaſies, by reading human ſentiments in human language; by ſcenes from which a hermit may eſtimate the tranſactions of the world, and a confeſſor predict the progreſs of the paſſions. JOHNSON.

——— My deſign amounted to no more than a deſire to encourage others to think of preſerving the oldeſt editions of the *Engliſh* writers, which are growing ſcarcer every day; and to afford the world all the aſſiſtance or pleaſure it can receive from the moſt authentic copies extant of its NOBLEST POET.

STEVENS.

It is ſaid of the oſtrich, that ſhe drops her egg at random, to be diſpoſed of as chance pleaſes; either brought to maturity by the ſun's kindly warmth, or elſe cruſhed by beaſts, and the feet of paſſengers: ſuch, at leaſt, is the account which naturaliſts has given us of this extraordinary bird; and admitting it for a truth, ſhe is in this a fit emblem of almoſt every great genius; they conceive and produce with eaſe thoſe noble iſſues of human underſtanding; but incubation, the dull work of putting them correctly upon paper, and afterwards publiſhig, is a taſk they cannot away with. If the original ſtate of all ſuch author's writings, even from *Homer* downward, could be inquired into and known, they would yield proof in abundance of the juſtneſs of what is here aſſerted: but the author now before us ſhall ſuffice for them all; being at once the greateſt inſtance of genius in producing noble things, and of negligence in providing for them afterwards.

CAPEL.

There

There was a time, when the art of Johnſon was ſet above the divineſt raptures of SHAKESPEARE. The preſent age is well convinced of the miſtake. And now the Genius of SHAKESPEARE is idolized in its turn. Happily for the public taſte it can ſcarcely be too much ſo. HURD.

SHAKESPEARE is a kind of eſtabliſhed religion in poetry, and his bays will always flouriſh with undiminiſhed verdure. When I ſay this, I am not for maintaining that he is not guilty of tranſgreſſions, but for every tranſgreſſion he recompences his auditors with beauties which no art will ever equal. That the notes eſtabliſhed by *Ariſtotle* and *Horace* are agreeable to nature, I am ready to allow, and that inferior geniuſes may avail themſelves by a ſkilful conformity to them, I as freely aſſent to. But fable is but a ſecondary beauty; the exhibition of character, and the excitement of the paſſions, juſtly claim the precedence in dramatic poetry. It is in writing as in gardening, where nature does not afford ſpontaneous beauties, recourſe muſt be had to the eſtabliſhments of flow and endeavouring art, to the regularity of uniform viſtas, the intricacy of elaborate mazes, and a ſtudied inſertion of ever-greens; but when the courſe of the country of itſelf preſents attractive ſcenes on every ſide, when the trees branch out with a free expanſion, and the bold proſpect ſurprizes with the heath, the lawn, the hill, and valley in wild variety, the littleneſs of tedious culture is unneceſſary, and trifling ornaments are unlooked for.

Gray's-Inn Journal.

SHAKESPEARE came out of Nature's hand like Pallas out of Jove's head, at full growth and mature. COLMAN.

Voltaire is a genius, but not of SHAKESPAERE's magnitude Without recurring to diſputable authority, I appeal from *Voltaire* to himſelf. I ſhall not avail myſelf of his former encomiums on our mighty poet; though the *French* critic has twice tranſlated the ſame ſpeech in *Hamlet*, ſome years ago in admiration, latterly in deriſion; and I am ſorry to find that his judgment grows weaker, when it ought to be further matured. WALPOLE.

Such is SHAKESPEARE's merit, that the more juſt and refined the taſte of the nation has become, the more he has increaſed in reputation. He was approved by his own age, admired by the next, and is revered, and almoſt adored by the preſent. His merit is diſputed by little wits, and his errors are the jeſts of little critics; but there has not been a great poet, or great critic, ſince his time, who has not ſpoken of him with the higheſt veneration, Mr. *Voltaire* excepted. His tranſlations often, his criticiſms ſtill oftener, prove he did not perfectly underſtand the words of the author: and therefore it is certain he could not enter into his meaning. He comprehended enough to perceive he was unobſervant of ſome eſtabliſhed rules of compoſition; the felicity with which he performs what no rules can teach, eſcapes him. Will not an intelligent ſpectator admire the prodigious ſtructures of *Stone-henge*, becauſe he does not know by what law of mechanics they were raiſed? Like them our author's works will remain for ever the greateſt monuments of the amazing force of nature, which we ought to view as we do other prodigies, with an attention to, and admiration of their ſtupendous parts, and proud irregularity of greatneſs.

An Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of SHAKESPEARE; Author unknown. / Mrs. Montagu

FINIS.

AUG 1 1919